



# THE HEALTH OF DUBLIN.

BY

FREDERIC W. PIM.

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A  
SKETCH OF SANITARY PROGRESS  
IN DUBLIN:

BEING  
AN ADDRESS

*Delivered at the Annual General Meeting of the Dublin Sanitary  
Association, 12th March, 1891.*

BY  
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PRESIDENT OF THE ASSOCIATION



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## A D D R E S S .

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Ladies and Gentlemen,—I endeavoured last year to put before you a general view of the Evolution of Sanitation, as an application of scientific principles to the practical work of the preservation and improvement of the health of the community, and to show something of the processes by which sanitation in Dublin has grown during the lifetime of our Association, from an almost rudimentary stage, to one which, though the actual attainment leaves very much to be desired, has, at least, placed within our power the means of indefinite progress.

Three primary conditions were laid down as essential for our purpose—knowledge of facts, sound laws, and a living force of public opinion to make those laws operative. These three conditions, which may be compared to the *definitions*, the *axioms*, and the *postulates*, by which the sanitary problem is to be solved, it was admitted we possessed in Dublin to a fairly satisfactory extent.

I showed last year, as I hope with some measure of success, that the Sanitary Association played no inconsiderable part in the various steps by which those conditions were secured, and in doing so I dealt with the history of the Association mainly as illustrating the growth of the Sanitary Idea in the community, and as showing the general lines in which that growth has moved, and the broad principles on which the Association has acted. On the present occasion I

propose to consider the history of the Association in relation to some of the more important defects in the sanitary condition of Dublin, and the measures which have, from time to time, been put in operation for the amelioration of those evils.

The generally insanitary condition of the City of Dublin, at the time of the starting of the Sanitary Association, was so notorious that the Provisional Working Committee in their report to the first General Meeting, held 11th November, 1872, deemed no preamble necessary, and announced the birth of the infant Association in these simple words—"On May 17th, 1872, some gentlemen met to consider what steps could be taken to improve the very defective sanitary condition of Dublin." I need not, therefore, produce any extensive array of statistics to prove the urgent need there was for some vigorous effort at reform. A very few facts will suffice

In the previous year, 1871, the death-rate in the City of Dublin had been 30·7 per thousand inhabitants. Amongst all the great towns of Great Britain, this rate was exceeded in that year only by Manchester with 31·3; Newcastle-on-Tyne with 32·2; Glasgow with 32·9; and Liverpool with 35·2. In all the seven years ending with 1871, the only other town, except these four, which ever exceeded 30·7 was Leeds, which in 1866, had a death-rate of 31·8 per thousand. In the General Dublin Registration District, which includes the suburban townships as far out as Kingstown, the rate for 1871 was 28·5. In the London General Registration District the rate for the same year was 24·6, and even in East London, the very worst of the five metropolitan districts, the rate for 1871 was only 26·1 per thousand.

The population of the Dublin District in 1871 was 314,666. There were, therefore, in the whole district in the year 1871, fully 1,200 more deaths than there would have been had the rate not exceeded that of London. The population of the City of Dublin within the municipal boundary in 1871, was 246,300. Had it been no more unhealthy than even East London, upwards of 1,100 lives would have been spared. The year 1871 was not exceptionally unhealthy; but within the seven years prior to the foundation of the Association there had been three severe epidemics :

|           |           |         |       |         |
|-----------|-----------|---------|-------|---------|
| 1865-'66, | Fever,    | causing | 1,063 | deaths. |
| 1866,     | Cholera,  | „       | 1,186 | „       |
| 1871-'72, | Smallpox, | „       | 1,647 | „       |

thus nearly 4,000 persons were carried off by three of the most preventible of infectious diseases. It was estimated that the direct actual money cost of those three epidemics was not less than £70,000. In 1872 Cholera existed in several places in Eastern Europe, and there seemed much reason to fear that it would reach our shores, as it had done in 1831, 1854, and 1865. These were the broad facts which called the Sanitary Association into existence. I need not attempt to enumerate, much less to describe, the various sanitary defects which then existed. It would, perhaps, hardly be exaggeration to say that, with the sole exception of the Vartry water supply, none of the recognized appliances and means of sanitation existed at all, or only under such conditions as rendered them effectual rather for harm than for good, while examples in plenty were to be found of almost every conceivable kind of "death-trap," some of them on the very largest scale.

To cope with all these difficulties the organization of the Public Health Department was both ill-adapted and altogether insufficient in numbers. The working staff, under the "Executive Sanitary Officer," who was also Secretary to the Public Health Committee, consisted of a force of eight Sanitary Sergeants (so-called), and two Superintendents, all members of the Metropolitan Police, placed at the disposal of the Corporation by the Chief Commissioner, and carrying out all the duties of inspection of nuisances of every kind throughout the city, as well as that of attending in the Police Courts on all legal proceedings that might become necessary. The Medical Officer of Health was not, in any way, charged with the control of the department, and the City Analyst was at that time outside of it altogether.

In the early years of the Association there was nothing more strenuously urged by it both on the Public Health Committee and on the Corporation, than the utter inadequacy and unsuitability of this staff for the work to be done, considering that there were in Dublin upwards of 9,000 tenement houses requiring constant watching, besides all the work arising in connection with a multitude of dairy yards, stable and manure yards, slaughter-houses, and other similar sources of perennial nuisance.

To these urgent representations the reply of the Public Health Committee was two-fold—firstly, that the means at their disposal were insufficient, and, secondly, that they could not induce the Commissioner of Police to spare any more of his men for their purposes. Why the Public Health Committee should, for so long a time, have held to the notion that none but Police Constables or Sergeants could properly discharge the duties of Sanitary Inspectors, was never fully apparent; but it must be admitted that when only

a very small force could be employed, the habits of discipline of the Police gave them a considerable advantage, while they also, no doubt, appeared clothed with an authority which did not invest a mere ordinary citizen; the Public Health Committee thus rendering homage to Carlyle's "Philosophy of Clothes."

The want of means was a more substantial as well as a more real difficulty. The expenditure for sanitary purposes was limited to whatever could be spared out of the Borough Fund after the discharge of a variety of other charges, which left available for the purposes of the Public Health Committee a total amount of not more than about £3,000 a year. This difficulty, however, was completely removed by the Public Health Act of 1878, which conferred upon Sanitary Authorities legally unlimited powers of expenditure for sanitary purposes, while the definition of "sanitary purposes" under that Act is of the widest description.

The earliest suggestion of the Association as to the proper organization of the Public Health Department was that, first of all, the whole department should be placed under the undivided control of a qualified and competent Medical Superintendent, devoting his whole time to the business. This, which was much dwelt on before Sir Robert Rawlinson's Royal Sanitary Commission in 1879, formed one of the recommendations of the Commissioners and resulted in the arrangement by which Sir Charles Cameron, M.D. has, since 1881, filled the combined offices of Superintendent Medical Officer of Health, and Executive Sanitary Officer, as well as that of Public Analyst to the City of Dublin.

Secondly the Association urged that there was required a complete system of district medical supervision, and they suggested that for this purpose the services of the fourteen Dis-

dispensary Medical Officers should be brought into requisition, each to be a Medical Officer of Health for his own district, having under him a sufficient staff of qualified Inspectors, and to report weekly to the Chief Health Officer of the City. This suggestion was at the time altogether unacceptable to the Public Health Committee, and when the provision in the Public Health Bill of 1874, by which all the Dispensary Medical Officers throughout Ireland were to become Sanitary Officers, each for his own district, brought the method of practically working out the idea under full consideration, the views of the Association became so far modified, that they supported the conjoint Committee of the Irish Medical Associations, which included representatives of the Dispensary Medical Officers themselves, in objecting to the arrangement, on the ground that it seemed likely, in Urban districts, to lead to a detrimental conflict of jurisdiction between the Guardians, by whom the Medical Officers were appointed and controlled as regards their medical functions, and the Sanitary Authority, to whom they owed allegiance in regard to their functions as Sanitary Officers.

In spite of the objections thus made by the Conjoint Committee, the provision referred to was passed into Law in the Act of 1874, and was perpetuated in the Act of 1878. It was, I believe, persevered in by the Government, solely with a view to that false economy, but real waste, by which many of our best administrative measures have been marred in their working, and I feel satisfied that a more concentrated system, by which the District Medical Sanitary Officers should have formed an integral part of the Sanitary Organization, would have tended to a much greater efficiency in working.

The reiterated representations of the Association as to the

inadequacy of the Executive Staff of the Public Health Department—the Inspectors and Sanitary Sub-Officers—ultimately bore fruit, when, under the energetic chairmanship of the late Mr. Edmund Dwyer Gray, the absurd restriction to the employment of Police Officers only, for Sanitary Inspection purposes, was abolished. Since then by degrees the staff has been enlarged, and is now framed on a very different scale from the “eight Sanitary Sergeants and two Superintendents,” who in 1873 were deemed quite sufficient for the needs of a City in which, according to the statements of the Public Health Committee itself, there were nearly 10,000 tenement houses, and more than 1,000 houses unfit for habitation owing to their condition, or to the want of provision for sanitary accommodation. Sir Charles Cameron has now under his control—besides various officers having special departmental duties, and the Secretary and Clerks of the Public Health Committee, and irrespective of the Dispensary Medical Officers,—four Constables and sixteen other Sanitary sub-Officers, with two Sanitary Inspectors—both being police Sergeants, for the north and south sides of the City respectively, all being under the general Superintendence of Inspector James Halligan of the metropolitan police. It is, however, greatly to be regretted that the Public Health Committee have not yet adopted the suggestion of the Association, for the institution of a sufficient qualifying examination before making any new appointments to the post of sanitary sub-officer. Careful training is now required as a qualification for a nurse for the sick; and we have lately had an examination instituted for the registration of operative plumbers. It is high time that this system, which is being extended in all directions, should be applied to the “preventive service” of the sanitary authorities also.

In his Presidential Address in 1886, Dr. Grimshaw quoted in full a memorial presented by the Association in the early part of 1873 to the Lord Mayor and the Corporation, in which, after laying down six propositions showing the pressing need which then existed for sanitary reform, a series of nine special recommendations were suggested as necessary to bring it about.

Of these the first and the last referred to the organization and staff of the Public Health Department, which I have already dealt with.

The second was for the abelition of the Corporation scavenging depôts, and the daily removal beyond the city bounds of the filth collected by the scavengers.

These scavenging depôts were for years a standing "bug-bear" of the Association, and representations grounded on detailed reports, drawn up by sub-committees of inspection on behalf of the Association, were at different times made to the Sanitary Authorities about them. They were four or five in number, covering large spaces of ground, and, in some cases, situated in close proximity to thickly inhabited neighbourhoods. The practice was to deposit in them the stuff collected by the scavengers' carts—road scrapings, market refuse, ashpit cleanings, and all sorts of abominations. In the spring an uncertain proportion of these accumulations was sold or given away for use as manure—in 1873 two-pence a load was obtained at the Clanbrassil-street yard; but the demand in this way was small, and the heaps from year to year grew broader and higher, resembling in size the great heap of "breeze" in the yard of the Gas Company, so familiar to travellers on the Kingstown Railway.

Much improvement has recently taken place in this respect. By the purchase of a Hopper barge, which seems

to have cost some £6,000, and the erection of a wharf and crane at George's-quay, the cleansing department are now enabled to send their stuff out to sea and to discharge it in deep water. In 1889, it is stated by Mr. Spencer Harty in his recent presidential address to the Institution of Civil Engineers, the "Eblana" made 159 trips, and carried off 67,185 loads of refuse, at a cost of about  $4\frac{1}{2}$ d. a load : no doubt, also, the improved street paving has much lessened the quantity of road scrapings to be disposed of. As a result the Clanbrassil-street depôt, at all events, where I remember in former times ascending a mountain which afforded a commanding view over Black Pitts and the Poddle Valley, is now empty. It is to be regretted that, either by this means, or by some other, the problem of the complete daily removal of refuse has not yet been solved, and that there are still in the city, though, perhaps, not now in such populous districts, depôts where large quantities of filth having some manurial value, and therefore, *ipso facto*, unfit to remain within the city limits, are stored until removed as manure by farmers or market gardeners.

The third recommendation of the Memorial of 1873 was that arrangements should be made for the regular and frequent removal of all sorts of filth and house refuse from private premises. In 1873, and even as late as 1878 or 1879, there was absolutely no public provision for the removal of refuse from private premises. Those who could afford it made arrangements with private contractors who periodically emptied ashpits, at a very considerable expense. The contractors were then themselves at a difficulty as to how to dispose of the stuff, and, no doubt, habitually violated all sanitary principles and statutes by storing it in improper and illegal places. As to the tenement houses and the dwellings

of the poorer classes, huge receptacles, misnamed ashpits, reeking with abomination, were allowed to accumulate till they overflowed. Take this one sample from the Report of our Inspection Committee, dated September 18th, 1872, on Grace's-court, off the Coombe, opposite the foot of Francis-street—a long, narrow court, hardly more than a passage, flanked on each side by high houses, and which was then inhabited by no less than twelve families, all dependent for their water supply on a public fountain in Francis-street :—

“Very dirty—A most offensive drain conveys liquid filth from an ashpit collection at the far end along the whole length of the court.”

And again, on March 14th, 1873—six months later :—

“Indescribably filthy—The passage full of filth from the overflowing ashpit.”

To this latter report, it may be worth adding, the answer of the Public Health Committee was :—

“Acted on before receipt of complaint.”

This might be said to have been the normal condition of the narrow courts and tenement yards throughout the city, sometimes with the addition that the surface drainage of the yard found its way into the basement of the dwelling-house, as, for instance, was found to be the case in November, 1872, at No. 50 Bishop-street.

There are bad places to be found in the city still; but none such as these. On a recent tour of inspection,—in the course of which, I visited some of the worst spots I could find, and particularly some on which the reports of our earlier years were made, I did not succeed in finding a single full ashpit, and in most of the yards there were manifest traces of the recent visits of the cleansing department with the shovel and the hose-pipe. In 1889—I quote from Sir Charles Cameron's Annual Report for that year—there

were 9,352 portable dust-bins in use in the city, from which, during the year, 22,267 cart-loads of ashes and refuse were removed, whilst 52,881 loads were also removed from the ashpits which still exist; 1,055 additional dust-bins were supplied during the year, and Sir Charles Cameron expresses the hope that within two or three years the relative proportion of portable dust-bins and ashpits will be reversed. Grace's-court, one of the worst places of human habitation I ever saw, has long been a thing of the past.

As to public scavenging—the surface cleansing of the streets, lanes, and alleys—we need only look around us to see the improvement which has taken place. Twenty years ago some of the principal streets, and most of those of the second rank, were still macadamized, and that with a soft, unsuitable stone, for really good stone for road metal is somewhat scarce and dear in the neighbourhood of Dublin, which, by the way, is the only plausible excuse for the condition of the roads in the Southern part of the county and in the suburban townships. Now, good paving has, in almost every street with much traffic, replaced the uneven macadam, and has rendered it possible to carry out the improved scavenging which could hardly have been attempted formerly. And the improvement is certainly not confined to the principal streets. The side streets and lanes of Dublin are now far better kept than they were twenty years ago. There are many things at which we may still grumble or lament; but I believe the condition of the streets of “Dirty Dublin” compares fairly with that of most of the cities of Great Britain. I need hardly say that this improvement has not been had for nothing. At least £200,000 has been spent in paving; and on the public and domestic scavenging the expenditure in 1889 was £34,402.

We next come, in the fourth Recommendation, to the slaughter-houses and cattle-yards, and other such places, where filth is unavoidably produced or accumulated. The manure yards in 1873 were a terrible and widespread nuisance, and many times formed the subject of special reports from our Executive Committee to the Sanitary Authority. Let me particularize one or two :—

One of our very first reports to the Public Health Committee was in reference to a series of manure yards in Maelean's-lane, off the Coombe, where a regular industry was carried on in the collection and mixing of a choice blend of manures, for subsequent disposal in the proper season to farmers and gardeners. This was reported in August, 1872 as containing "several score of pigs; over 150 loads of offensive manure." In reply we were informed that "notices and summonses had been served and orders obtained, for the suppression of nuisances, but not as yet obeyed." In reply to a second report on 18th September, we learned that "an order had been obtained for the suppression of the nuisance on 15th September." Yet five subsequent inspections, ranging from 12th November, 1872, to 28th May, 1873, were reported in almost a stereotyped form of words as shewing it to be "same as before."

On 2nd October, 1875, a special sub-committee was appointed "to report upon the most notorious of these nuisances"—private and public manure yards. Their report on Maelean's-lane was as follows :—

"We found it in its usual filthy condition, all the yards seeming in full working order, and containing large quantities of very offensive manure.

"The lane contains three distinct manure yards, and a fourth is situated near the corner in Ardee-row. The lane runs through a densely populated block of tenement houses, several of which are within twenty

yards of the nuisance in question. One house, in which contagious disease at present prevails, is immediately adjacent to one of the yards. The nuisance consists of stable manure, cleanings of ashpits and privies, and road scrapings brought here from the Corporation dépôt. The accumulations were extremely offensive. Men were employed mixing the various ingredients, which consisted chiefly of ashpit and privy cleanings."

There was at that time a similar factory in Cole-alley (off Meath-street), and both were carried on,—I was going to say under the noses—but at all events with the full knowledge and sanction—of the Public Health Committee, whose Executive Officers then held a theory which they maintained stoutly against all remonstrances, and in spite of the strongest olfactory evidence, that ashes collected by the professional ashpit cleaners already referred to, and road scrapings drawn from the Clanbrassil-street dépôt, were deodorizers and disinfectants, more powerful than "all the perfumes of Arabia," to sweeten the composite mass.

I refer to these things now only as illustrations, showing how gross an evil, if it only have old prescription at its back, can still for long periods find defenders, and yet how with time and patience such evil things succumb at last. The Cole-alley yards have long ago been abolished, and the site of Maclean's-lane is now built on.

As to the slaughter-houses, though I cannot speak from accurate personal knowledge, I have no doubt I am justified in saying that the inspection of such places is now far more systematic and effective than it was in those days. No improvement, however, that can be brought about by supervision or inspection can or ought to reconcile us to the continued existence of a number of private slaughter-houses within a populous city, and in Dublin there are still upwards of eighty, which in 1889 were the subjects of more than

1,000 inspections by the sanitary officers. I have no hesitation in saying that, viewing them merely from a sanitary point of view, not one of these ought to exist.

But when we come to consider how they are to be got rid of, we find, as so often happens in the case of the most desirable reforms, that vested interests stop the way. When the abattoir was opened, it was generally supposed that immediate steps would follow for the suppression, gradually, but within a reasonable time, of all the private slaughter-houses in the city. It was at first hoped that the butchers themselves would voluntarily avail themselves of a well-planned, well-conducted establishment such as the abattoir undeniably is. This hope having been disappointed, it was expected that the Corporation would make use of the compulsory powers which they were understood to possess to close by degrees all the houses licensed since the Act of 1849; but here the law stepped in. The abattoir had been built just outside the city boundary though connected by a tunnel with the Cattle Market, which is inside, and being beyond their legal jurisdiction, it was found that the Corporation could not legally compel anyone to use it. So the matter remained from 1882 to 1890, Sir Charles Cameron lamenting year after year in his reports that the business of the abattoir bore so small a proportion to the whole trade of the city, and the traders refusing to be induced to transfer their operations to it. In 1883 there were 11,350 animals slaughtered in the abattoir. In 1889 there were 12,098, and every year the revenue had been considerably less than the expenditure.

A clause in the Corporation Bill of last year declared the abattoir to be for all purposes within the city boundary, and thus conferred on the Corporation the long-desired power of compelling the owners of slaughter-houses licensed since the

year 1849, to transfer their operations to it. Unfortunately this was coupled with a clause inserted while the Bill was under consideration of Parliament, not only directing the Corporation to give compensation in case of exercising these powers, but also empowering them to grant licenses for new Slaughter Houses, and thereby rendering it certain that a most necessary piece of sanitary reform can only be effected at a cost, and under conditions, such as to enormously delay its accomplishment.

I do not wish in the least to disparage a respectable body of traders, or to accuse them of any undue or discreditable selfishness in thus seeking to protect their own interests, but I would point out that when the Legislature in its wisdom decreed that to work more than ten hours a-day was injurious to the health of women and children in textile factories, no compensation was granted to factory owners for the compulsory shortening of their hours of work, or for the many other restrictions which have since been imposed on them by statute, and some of which have undoubtedly lessened their margin of profits; and I see no reason why the owners of slaughter-houses should be entitled to compensation from which manufacturers have been debarred. It may be said that the factory acts, taken generally, have proved in their working "a blessing in disguise" to the manufacturers, and I partly admit it; but so, I am persuaded, would the total abolition of all intra-municipal slaughtering, and the universal resort to the public abattoir, ultimately prove of advantage to the victuallers, and I am sure that it would be so to the consumers of meat, and that it would remove a standing blot on the condition of the city.

Returning to our memorial of 1873, the fifth recommendation was "That effectual means should be taken to

prevent the habitation of houses officially condemned," and the sixth, "That measures should be taken to prevent cellars which have been closed, from becoming mere storehouses for filth, or receptacles of sewage, as too often is at present the case." For a long time it was one of our standing complaints that houses condemned as unfit for habitation, and from which the inhabitants had been ejected, were afterwards surreptitiously taken possession of by squatters, who lived in even worse circumstances than the legitimate occupiers had previously done. This grievance has been removed by the increased vigilance of the enlarged inspecting staff, and anyone who will take even the most casual walk through the old parts of the city, cannot fail to see a multitude of deserted and locked-up houses, of which a large proportion are falling into utter ruin. Few of these condemned and detenanted houses seem to have been rebuilt or improved by their owners so as to bring them again into condition for lawful occupation, and it may even in some cases be a matter of doubt whether the closing of single houses has any directly beneficial effect on the Public Health, the deserted and ruinous houses becoming squalid and fetid centres of decay, and further depressing the still inhabited dwellings which surround them. As regards the disused cellar dwellings,—and the number of inhabited cellars has been immensely reduced by the action of the Sanitary Authorities since the commencement of our labours—I fear there has been little or no improvement. It is shocking to see the number of disused basement rooms throughout the city, where the windows have been knocked out, and which are now receptacles for growing heaps of rubbish, including sometimes offal from fish and vegetable stalls, which must infect the rooms above them

with their exhalations, especially where, as in too many cases, there are channels by which water finds its way into the heaps.

The seventh recommendation suggested special hospital provisions against a then threatened invasion of cholera, and may for the present be passed over.

The eighth also dealt with the interception of cholera by a quarantine hospital in the port, which was afterwards carried out by the hospital ship in the river and certain sheds on the west pier at Kingstown; but as their services have not since been called seriously into requisition, we need not now dwell on them. Along with this were included recommendations with regard to the disinfection both of dwellings in which infectious disease has occurred, and also of the clothing of such patients. Much has been done in both these matters. How far the system works—if I may so say, automatically—so that an outbreak of fever or scarlatina is certain to bring the disinfectors on the scene at the proper juncture—I have not the means of knowing; but certain it is that in no case of such an outbreak need there be any difficulty or delay in procuring, by application at Cork-hill, the services of the sanitary staff to cleanse or purify the room or house. Sir Charles Cameron reports that in 1889, 511 dwellings were gratuitously cleansed and chemically disinfected; and in 1887, when zymotic diseases were far more prevalent, there were 1,357 such disinfectings. As regards the disinfection of clothes and bedding, I cannot do better than quote a paragraph from Sir Charles Cameron's report for 1889:—

#### “DISINFECTION.

“No charge is made for disinfecting dwellings, clothing, or bedding, in the City of Dublin. The infected articles are sent for disinfection

and returned to their owners without any fee being charged. As a result of this liberality, disinfection is thoroughly carried out in Dublin.

“The infected beds of the poorer classes are destroyed by fire at the disinfecting house, Marrowbone-lane, and new beds are gratuitously supplied in place of the infected ones. In 1889 the number of persons who used the disinfecting chamber was 617, as against 939 in 1888, and 1,443 in 1887. In 1889, 13,530 articles were disinfected; in 1888, 17,053; and in 1887, 1,369. The number of infected beds destroyed was 663 in 1889; 1,817 in 1888; and 1,636 in 1887.

“In 1888 a laundry for washing and making up infected linen, etc., was established, but it has not been as yet much used, no doubt because to some extent there has not been much fever during 1889. The disinfection of clothing, bedding, etc., is effected by means of air heated by jets of burning coal gas. The atmosphere of the disinfecting chamber is kept up to the temperature of about 250°. The clothes, etc., are brought into the disinfecting house through a gate, sorted in an apartment, introduced into the hot air apparatus, and after disinfection are removed to a room from which they are conveyed through a separate door into the van by which they are to be brought to their owners. The articles, after disinfection, are never placed in any room, van, etc., with which the infected articles have been in contact.”

The work is, I believe, effectually done, and the articles, after disinfection, returned carefully and in good condition. I have myself been glad to avail myself of it on occasion, and I would strongly recommend to anyone who may have any infectious disease in his house, especially scarlatina, the germs of which diffuse themselves so ubiquitously through blankets and clothing, to lose no time after the disease has been got under, in sending everything which has been exposed to contagion to the dépôt in Marrowbone-lane, for disinfection.

In connection with this I am reminded of an old bone of contention between the Association and the Public Health Committee—the insufficiency of the arrangements for the conveyance to hospital of patients suffering from infectious diseases. Much space in our Reports for 1873, '74, and '75

was filled with correspondence and argument on this subject. The "horse-less cab" which was kept at the Marrowbone-lane dépôt, and the "cab-less horse" which dwelt nearly two miles away in the cabman's stable at Bass-place, off Denzille-street, and which horse and cab required to be brought together while the patient waited or died, were long a standing subject of somewhat grim facetiousness at meetings of the Executive Committee. It seems almost incredible that such an arrangement could find anyone to justify or even to palliate it; yet much ink and paper were wasted over it in apparently fruitless controversy through at least two successive years. Happily, the judicial separation of those days ended not in divorce but in a reconciliation—the cab at Marrowbone-lane is horseless no longer, and the once cableless horse now draws some 120 to 150 patients to hospital every year, besides his perhaps more laborious duty with the disinfecting vans.

The memorial of 1873 by no means covers all the ground occupied by the Sanitary Association from time to time during its career; but as it formed what may perhaps be termed our opening manifesto, I have thought myself warranted in going somewhat fully through the very comprehensive programme which it laid down. Many other steps in the direction of sanitary improvement have during the same time been taken, with which the Association has been less closely identified, but which seem to call for some notice, which, however, in the limited time left to me must necessarily be brief, and without relation to their proportionate importance or to their chronological sequence.

The gigantic evil of the pollution of the river Liffey remains untouched; the scheme of main drainage, sanctioned by Parliament in 1871, having fallen through

owing to financial difficulties, and the Royal Sanitary Commission of 1879 not having succeeded in giving life to any of the several schemes for the same purpose which were laid before it; but one step at least has meanwhile been made in the carrying out of the Rathmines and Pembroke Main Drainage Scheme of 1877, by which the sewage of those two important Townships has for some ten years past been separated from that of the city, and is now discharged at ebb tide into the fairway of the Liffey channel, half-way between the Pigeon House Fort and the Poolbeg Lighthouse. Whatever objection this outfall may be open to as regards its effect on the Liffey or on the adjacent foreshores, there can be no doubt that as regards the two townships, the scheme effected a very great improvement. A great deal has been done during the same time in the improvement of the city sewers, which have in many cases been reconstructed, with improved sections, better gradients, and straighter courses, and with due attention to ventilation—a most essential point, if we are not to be poisoned by the leaking of sewer gases into our houses, which the most effective traps could hardly prevent if the main sewers were unprovided with ventilators.

The Township of Rathmines and Rathgar has been provided, unfortunately perhaps at a somewhat extravagant cost, with an independent water supply, at high pressure, and of a quality at least equal to the Vartry, if we leave out of consideration some unimportant discolouration arising from defective filtration.

Amongst street improvements must be mentioned the opening of the new street—now called Lord Edward-street—from the City Hall to Christ Church Cathedral, at a cost of £69,000, and of Tara-street, which cost about £20,000. A new street has also been opened by the

Corporation between Blackhall-place and Ellis'-quay, and another between Upper Bridge-street and Usher's-quay, costing upwards of £8,000 a-piece. The widening and rebuilding of the upper part of George's-street by the Dublin South City Market Company, and the substitution of their market buildings for the slaughter-houses and filthy tenements of the old Castle Market, deserve also to be noted, as well as some minor street widenings which have been effected in other parts of the city. Good work has also been done, partly at the instance of the Open Spaces Association in conjunction with the Dublin branch of the Kyrle Society in the preservation and dedication to the public of open spaces in several parts of the city. Amongst others which have been secured, may be mentioned the Cathedral Close at Christ Church, and St. Mary's Church-yard. Queen's-square, off Great Brunswick-street—a space of about 6,500 square yards, has recently been purchased by the Corporation, and converted from a dreary waste into a garden. Lord Ardilaun's splendid gift to the city of Stephen's-green Park, is, of course, fresh in the remembrance of all of us. These all must be considered important sanitary improvements, directly, in clearing away groups of notoriously unwholesome dwellings, and indirectly, by opening out increased breathing space, and facilitating the free current of air.

The Baths and Wash-houses in Tara-street, opened in 1885, at a cost of about £14,000, are the result of a well-intended endeavour to meet a very great want—the means of personal cleanliness amongst the people of Dublin. The receipts appear to be slightly less than the working expenses, which in 1889, amounted to £1,224 16s. 5d., therefore contributing nothing towards meeting the interest and repayment of the principal borrowed for their erection;

but considerable use seems to be made of them. Irrespective of the swimming bath, the use of which naturally varies greatly with the temperature of the season—there were 67,259 bathers (men and boys) in 1887, and only 23,449 in 1888—and which is doubtless chiefly resorted to for amusement, the warm and shower-baths were used in 1889 by 35,186 males, and 6,478 females, while the Wash-house was used by 13,455 women.

It may be worthy of consideration whether baths and wash-houses on a much humbler and less costly scale, in such distribution through the city as would bring them within the reach of the large number who cannot, possibly, owing to the distance from their homes, resort to the fine central establishment in Tara-street, would not serve a very useful and much-needed purpose, and amply justify the cost of establishing them.

I have by no means exhausted the record of sanitary work in Dublin, and yet I have in some sense only dealt with the fringe of the subject. These reforms which have been referred to, considerable and valuable as many of them are, are but as the cleansing “of the outside of the cup and of the platter,” while the dwellings of the people remain such as they are. It is not in the streets, or even in the backyards, that the diseases which fill our hospitals and exaggerate our death-rate, are chiefly bred, but in the sleeping-places and living-rooms of the poor—aye, even in the bedrooms and sittingrooms of the prosperous and wealthy. It remains to examine what has been done to improve our dwellings themselves.

From the earliest days of the Sanitary Association it has been apparent that the true source of the excessive death-rate

of Dublin, amongst the artisan and working classes generally, lies in the condition of the tenement houses, in which an enormous proportion of those classes live. This fact is too notorious to need that I should dwell upon it now ; but I may be permitted to reproduce the paragraph in which Sir Robert Rawlinson and Dr. M'Cabe stated their "conclusion" on the subject in the Report of the Royal Sanitary Commission of 1879 :—

"That the tenement houses of Dublin . . . . appear to be the prime source and cause of the excessive high death-rate. That they are not properly classified, registered, and regulated ; that they are dilapidated, dirty, ill-ventilated much overcrowded, and that disease, a craving for stimulants, and its consequences—drunkenness and extreme poverty—are thereby fostered, and that until the condition of these houses shall have been improved the general health of the city will continue to be injuriously affected."

The "Corporation Act" of last year will do much to assist in improving the registration, classification, and regulation of the tenement houses ; but nothing that can be done will make the largest proportion of them really fit for healthy habitation.

As a typical example of a thoroughly insanitary dwelling, which yet has been permitted to be continuously occupied by a number of families, may be cited the house No. 2 Garden Lane, which, last September, forced itself into public notoriety by an outbreak of typhus fever affecting no fewer than nine persons, who all found their way to Cork-street Hospital. After the outbreak the house was "detenanted" and closed, a beautiful exemplification of the practice of locking the stable door after the horse is stolen. This house of three storeys, and containing a population sufficient to provide nine patients at one time for Cork-street Hospital, had no windows or opening whatever at the back, and therefore no

thorough ventilation, no back yard, and no sanitary accommodation whatever; nor for some months back had there even been any access to sanitary accommodation elsewhere.

It appears from Sir Charles Cameron's letter of 15th November last, which is appended to the Report of the Executive Committee, that until July last the owner of the neighbouring house had, in his charity, permitted the inhabitants of No. 2 to resort to his back yard on occasion; but since July, owing to a change of ownership, this grace had been withdrawn. Under such circumstances I fancy our medical members will bear me out if I say that an outbreak of typhus was only Nature's way of asserting her rights by planting her bacilli in a field apparently specially prepared for their cultivation.

There are plenty of other houses in Dublin built back to back, without yards. In White's-lane, off Dorset-street, for instance, there is a whole double row of such, having no sanitary accommodation except a place at the upper end of the court, common to the inhabitants of some half-a-dozen houses.

Such dwellings are totally unfit for human habitation, and no excuse for their existence ought to be accepted. One would have been glad to believe that the Public Health Committee were, through some excusable oversight, unaware of the condition of No. 2 Garden-lane; but this is not the position they take up. "The Public Health Act, 1878," sec. 46, provides that where a closet "has been and is used "in common by the inmates of two or more houses . . . "the Sanitary Authority need not require the same to be "provided for each house." This non-necessity for the enforcement of separate sanitary accommodation clearly contemplates the case of two or more houses having a common

back-yard, with suitable and sufficient accommodation for all the inmates of both; yet under this section the Public Health Committee consider that, "so long as the inhabitants of No. 2 Garden-lane were content with the sanitary accommodation provided so close to them," their wants were sufficiently met by a provision in the back-yard of the next house, to which their only access was by way of the street entrance and through the hall, and to which even that access had been denied to them from July to October.

This doctrine, that the assent of the sufferers from an abominable nuisance is a justification for its existence, and a reason for inaction on the part of the Sanitary Authority, is an old heresy of the Public Health Committee; for in 1876 they actually took a plébiscite of the neighbouring inhabitants on the question of the licensing of a slaughter-house in a most unsuitable situation, close to the Cork-street Fever Hospital, and having obtained 76 votes in its favour to 44 against, they "*felt it their duty* to recommend that the license be granted by the Municipal Council," which, I believe, was accordingly done. Fifteen years' further experience seems to have confirmed them in this pestilent sanitary heresy, for they now consider that if half-a-dozen families in one house are "content" with borrowed accommodation in their neighbour's back yard, the Public Health Committee cannot "conscientiously" interfere.

It was proved in evidence before the Royal Sanitary Commission that, in 1879, there were in Dublin 9,760 tenement houses, containing no fewer than 117,120 persons out of a total population of less than 250,000. Of these 9,760 houses no less than 2,300 were stated, on behalf of the Public Health Committee, to be incapable of being rendered habitable by any process short of absolute reconstruction,

while 3,500 more were placed in a second class, as being possibly susceptible of improvement, though in their actual condition unfit for habitation. As the worst houses were the most overcrowded, it is plain that there must have been not less than 75,000 human beings living in houses admittedly unfit for human habitation. What wonder if, under such circumstances, the Sanitary Authorities were almost ready to despair of effecting any substantial good by any means within their power. There are still upwards of 7,000 tenement houses in Dublin; but Sir Charles Cameron reports that, between 1877 and 1889, 2,536 houses and 1,100 rooms, kitchens, and cellars were closed by order of the Police Magistrates on the motion of the Sanitary Authority. Some of the houses thus closed have been repaired; but a large proportion of them have been altogether pulled down, or have become totally ruinous.

It was mainly through the exertions of the Association that Lord Cross's Act of 1876 was extended to Ireland, and it was due also to the initiative of the Association that the DUBLIN ARTISANS' DWELLINGS COMPANY, LIMITED, was in the same year started in its beneficent career. It is not necessary to occupy your time with details of the work of the Company. A notice of it almost in inverse ratio to its value and importance will suffice. The paid-up share capital of the Company is now £122,000. It pays a safe and regular dividend of  $4\frac{1}{2}$  per cent., and continues year by year to extend its operations. Up to the end of 1890, 1697 dwellings, constructed on the most improved sanitary principles, had been erected on 16 separate sites, and on a total area of 46 acres, affording accommodation for some 10,000 persons, and bringing in a net rental of nearly £20,000 a year.

The work of the Company has been immensely helped by

the co-operation of the Corporation in clearing sites under the Artisans' Dwellings Acts, already referred to. Under these Acts two sites, formerly occupied by the most horribly insanitary, overcrowded, ill-drained, ruinous habitations, have been entirely cleared of houses by the Corporation, and the ground let on leases to the Company. The Plunkett-street area, the clearing of which cost close on £30,000, is now occupied by 142 excellent houses, and the Coombe area by no less than 212. The Corporation themselves have erected a block of dwellings in Benburb-street, containing 144 tenements for work-people, the rents of which are stated by Mr. Spencer Harty, in his address already quoted, to be "*paid punctually in advance*," and another lot of 43 houses containing 86 tenancies, has been built on ground already the property of the Corporation, in Bow-lane, and is stated to fully repay the expenses. Several blocks of workmen's dwellings have also recently been erected by large employers of labour, which, if not always constructed on the best and most thorough sanitary principles, are at all events a great improvement on the tenement houses.

So foul was the Augean stable which had to be cleansed, so enormous is the mass which still remains to be moved, that all that has been done seems as yet but a drop in the bucket. Yet it has already appreciably affected the general death-rate. The average death-rate of the population housed by the Artisans' Dwellings Company does not exceed sixteen per thousand. Ten thousand persons thus transferred from the extreme of insanitary conditions and placed in safety is, as far as it goes, a noble work, though leaving still an immense field for this or other companies in the future.

This sketch of the progress of sanitation during the lifetime of the Association would not be complete without some

reference to the work done by the Association itself in the endeavour to bring about an improvement in the sanitary condition of the houses and premises of those who can afford to pay for sanitary protection.

There can be no greater mistake than to imagine that it is only the poor who live in insanitary dwellings and amid unwholesome surroundings. The inhabitants of a house entirely without drains and with deficient accommodation may be saved from typhus fever by the quantity of fresh air unavoidably admitted by badly hung sashes and broken panes, while a closely sealed up and pleasantly warmed mansion, with an untrapped closet, a leaking scullery-trap, or an untrapped, ill-jointed house drain, concealed under nicely sanded kitchen flags, may be a veritable death-trap.

Every autumn we have an outbreak of typhoid amongst our well-to-do classes, by which prominent citizens are struck down, some never to rise again; and every year this outbreak excites the same mild surprise as an unexpected and mysterious dispensation of Providence which must be accepted like the east winds in spring, and borne with the best resignation at our command. But it is no mysterious dispensation of Providence. It is merely nature working by her inexorable laws, and visiting on the rich as on the poor her displeasure at their ignorance or disobedience. For, what has happened? A family has been spending August and September at the seaside, or at some health-resort on the continent, leaving their house shut up or half occupied, and have come home to our chilly October weather, which moves them to close the windows and to light the fires. During their absence the drains have been little, if at all used, have lain stagnant or half dried, cracks have widened and traps have become partially unsealed, and drains and

soil-pipes, for want of frequent flushing, have become reservoirs of sewer gas, in which germs have been propagating ready for their season's work. The new warming of the house creates at once an upward current of air, sucks gently at the leaky drains, and draws up the imperceptible germs and diffuses them through the house. The returned travellers, fresh from the mountain air of Switzerland, or the sea breezes of Llandudno or the Isle of Man, are far more liable to infection than if they had remained at home and been gradually acclimatized, and within a few days there is a patient in one house down with fever, which, he is convinced, "he must have caught in the Paris hotel, where he noticed a bad smell in the courtyard the night he arrived there on his way home"; and in another house there are two or three children laid up with strange sore throats which their disappointed mother attributes to "the wetting of their feet that last day on the sands," or to the cold, wet weather which met them at home after so many hot weeks abroad.

It is from dangers such as these that the "Sanitary Protection Department" is designed to guard us. It is a common delusion that where there is no smell there is no danger. No such thing. The strong smelling nuisances are often almost innocuous, while the deadliest vapours come to us in gentle exhalations, perhaps with no smell at all, or only a faintly perceptible mustiness. Nothing but scientific examination will detect the defects through which these poisons find their way into our houses, and this scientific examination we provide for our members at a cost so infinitesimal in proportion to its value, that the wonder is that anyone is content to live a twelve-month in a house without it, and we supplement it at a still

smaller cost, with an annual re-inspection which, if not so essential, is at least extremely desirable to ensure that our house-drains, once set right, continue in perfect order.

The work done in this way by the Association is only as yet in its infancy. I am confident that, with increasing knowledge of its importance, it will grow into much greater dimensions in the future. But even now our Engineer is very fully employed, and 150 to 180 careful, conscientious examinations every year, many of them of large establishments with many inmates, are no unimportant service to the community.

The field for our labours in this direction is almost boundless, for, whilst a large majority of houses of the better class, both in the city and the suburbs, were built before the elementary principles of Sanitary Science had been laid down, a great proportion of those of lower classes, such as are inhabited by clerks and assistants in warehouses and shops, have been built in utter defiance of those principles, except in so far as, in very recent years, the Corporation By-laws have enforced some attention to them.

This brief and imperfect record of the Sanitary work of the past nineteen years shows, I think, a substantial amount of progress towards a better state of things, and that some not inconsiderable tangible result has been achieved in the improvement of the general health of the community, as shown in the gradual lowering of our excessive rate of mortality, seems a legitimate deduction from the figures which I put before you last year. How much, or how little, of this progress is to be directly attributed to the efforts of the Sanitary Association we need not very carefully enquire. It is sufficient for us to know that the progress made has, at

all events, fully justified the aims with which we set out, and proved the soundness of our practical recommendations, and that the results achieved have been such as to reward our exertions in the past, and to nerve us for continued efforts in the future.

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